

RICHARD WHEELER, 31, was born and raised in South Haven, Michigan. He married his wife, Celeste, in December 2012. They moved to Wenatchee in April 2014 to pursue Rick's fire career.

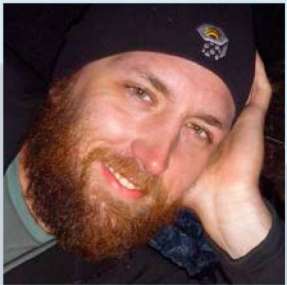
Fighting fires was in his blood. He was a fourth generation firefighter. He caught the fire bug in his early twenties shortly after leaving Americorps. Rick held many seasonal fire positions with the U.S. Forest Service. For several years he worked for the Tatanka Hotshots of South Dakota. In between seasons, Rick would return to Michigan to attend Grand Valley State University. He earned his bachelor's degree in Natural Resources Management in the spring of 2013. He planned on using his degree and seasonal work experience to obtain a permanent position with the Forest Service.

After moving to Wenatchee, he worked on an initial attack fire crew at the Wenatchee River Ranger District out of Leavenworth, WA for the 2014 season. For the 2015 season, he was working for the Methow Valley Ranger District engine crew based in Winthrop, WA.

Rick loved anything to do with the outdoors. He was an avid fisherman, hunter, and hiker. He belonged to a church hiking group, and was known for placing extra weight in his pack as a challenge and to keep in shape for the upcoming fire seasons. He would always push himself to be the best he could be.

As a person who lived in each moment, Rick will be remembered for his smile, laughter, and energy. He hated sitting around. He was always trying to learn something new, and was always finding new hobbies.

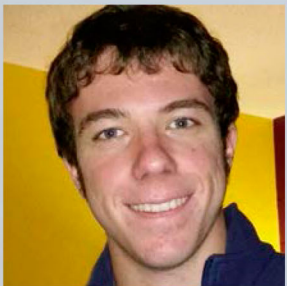
Rick will be remembered as a loving husband, brother, and son. He leaves behind wife, Celeste; parents, Karen and Randy Morey; and brothers Jacob Morey, Nathan Morey, and Robert Wheeler.



ANDREW ZAJAC, 26, was born to a closeknit family in Downers Grove, Illinois. Growing up he played the cello, football, and explored the nation's great outdoors on trips with his family. Together they planted thousands of seedling trees on their sustainable forest land, laying the foundation for a deep passion to care for nature as well as to enjoy being outdoors.

Andrew graduated from Downers Grove North High School and attended Case Western Reserve University where he played football and discovered a new passion for the field of ecology. This eventually led him to University of South Dakota where he earned a Master's Degree in biology. While there, he met and fell in love with Jennifer. They hiked the Pacific Crest Trail from Canada to Mexico in the summer of 2013 and were married in November 2014 at an outdoor ceremony in the Gila National Forest.

Their love of the outdoors brought them to Winthrop, WA where they began to set the foundation for a simple life together in the valley. Andrew had a deep love for his wife and family. He enjoyed creating things with his own two hands if for nothing else than to better understand how it worked. He took great pride in all that he did. He was a strong, independent, and intelligent man. He will be greatly missed. He is survived by his wife, Jennifer (Brown) Zajac; his parents, James and Mary Zajac; and his brother, William Zajac. I could go on forever, he is the love of my life, and I miss him more than words can express. - Jennifer



THOMAS NELSON ZBYSZEWSKI, 20, was born and raised in the Methow Valley.

Tom loved academics. He was an exceptional student and had close relationships with his teachers. He was salutatorian of his 2013 high school graduating class. He was involved in math competitions, Knowledge Bowl, and Speech and Debate. He was the first runner-up for the Washington State Poetry Out Loud competition in 2013.

He had a close group of friends, many of whom he knew all of his life. For many years he practiced Taekwondo, was a downhill skier and also a member of the Methow Valley swim team.

He was very involved in the theater, performing in many plays at the local theaters and school. He truly enjoyed encouraging and supporting younger kids in theater productions. After graduating from high school, he entered Whitman College in the fall 2013. Tom was going to start his junior year as a physics major, with a minor in Chinese. He loved Whitman, and had many friends there. From his first day, it became his new home, and he was excited about his classes and the academic challenges of that school. His interest in theater continued there, where he was in several productions during his freshman and sophomore years.

Tom loved his family and his friends, and was happy and enjoyed life. He was kind and big-hearted, and saw value in every person that he met. He always stuck up for the underdog. He always had kind words for everyone.

Tom was in his second summer of being a firefighter, working for the Methow Valley Ranger District, a job that he loved. He was interested in the firefighting job because he grew up with the Forest Service, where his mother, Jennifer, currently works, and his father, Ski, worked for many years.

He liked the arduous physical work required for the job, but what he really loved was the camaraderie of the crew, and being involved in the firefighting effort.

Tom loved the Methow Valley where he grew up and the people who live there. Everyone he was associated with enriched his life.

He will be sorely missed.